



Adolescent and School Health

NOVEMBER 29, 2024

Health Disparities Among LGBTQ Youth

AT A GLANCE

- CDC's 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) data show substantial health disparities among LGBTQ+ students. These are students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning.
- LGBTQ+ youth are at risk for negative health outcomes. These outcomes include poor mental health, suicidal thoughts and behaviors, experiences of violence, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).



Overview

Many LGBTQ+ youth thrive during adolescence. But stigma, discrimination, and other factors put them at increased risk for negative life outcomes.

Stigma comes in many forms, such as discrimination, harassment, family disapproval, social rejection, and violence. This puts LGBTQ+ youth at increased risk for certain negative health outcomes.

CDC works with education and public health partners to address health risks and disparities among LGBTQ+ youth.

Terminology

There are many terms used to describe sexual and gender identity.

On this site CDC's Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH) uses LGBTQ+ to refer to youth who identify with a sexual or gender identity other than cisgender or heterosexual. When specific studies or surveillance data are discussed, a narrower acronym may be used to refer to specific populations in the data.



Terminology
The current CDC DASH terminology and definitions assoc sexual and gender identities.

Why it is important

Compared to their cisgender and heterosexual peers, LGBTQ+ students are more likely to have:

Been bullied at school	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 29% LGBTQ+ students• 16% cisgender and heterosexual students
Used illicit drugs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 15% LGBTQ+ students• 8% cisgender and heterosexual students
Seriously considered suicide	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 41% LGBTQ+ students• 13% cisgender and heterosexual students
Felt sad or hopeless	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 65% LGBTQ+ students• 31% cisgender and heterosexual students
Been forced to have sex	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 17% LGBTQ+ students• 6% cisgender and heterosexual students

Misused prescription opioids

- 18% LGBTQ+ students
- 8% cisgender and heterosexual students

YRBS transgender report

In 2023, the national YRBS asked students about transgender identity for the first time. These YRBS data show that an average of 3% of school students identify as transgender. Another 2% report being unsure if they are transgender.

Compared with cisgender students, transgender students and students unsure if they are transgender are:

- More likely to report violence victimization, unstable housing, and suicidal thoughts and behaviors.
- Less likely to report feeling close to others at school.

More information

- [CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System](#)
- [Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data Summary & Trends Report 2013–2023](#)
- *MMWR*: [Sexual Risk Behavior Differences Among Sexual Minority High School Students — United States, 2015 and 2017](#)
- *MMWR*: [Violence Victimization, Substance Use, and Suicide Risk Among Sexual Minority High School Students — United States, 2015–2017](#)
- *MMWR*: [Disparities in School Connectedness, Unstable Housing, Experiences of Violence, Mental Health, and Suicidal Thoughts and Behaviors Among Transgender and Cisgender High School Students — Youth Risk Behavior Survey, United States, 2023](#)

SOURCES

CONTENT SOURCE:

Adolescent and School Health; National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (NCCDPHP)